

Testimony of Michael Shortell

Connecticut School Counselor Association

*in regards to*

**H.B. No. 5037-AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING  
JUNE 30, 2023.**

Appropriations Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education

Public Hearing-February 17, 2022

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and respected members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Michael Shortell, and I am a permanent substitute teacher at Emmett O'Brien Technical High School in Ansonia, CT. I am also a school counselor in training. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony regarding HB5037-An Act Adjusting the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2023. **Specifically, I am here today to testify about the importance of school counselors and the need to fund additional school counselors so that every student has access to a school counselor.**

I've seen firsthand that there are more and more needs for students each day. COVID-19 has impacted my job working in a school significantly. Students who have been out of school due to COVID-19 are falling behind in classes, severely impacting their academic performance in negative ways. COVID-19 has disrupted being able to effectively teach which has resulted in students not learning as much as they could be. There have been many negative social-emotional impacts from being quarantined and not having much social interaction since COVID-19 started. With all these issues arising, more school counselors need to be hired across all grade levels to help students cope with the negative effects that COVID-19 has had. There need to be more school counselors to meet the high needs of students. Students go through a lot in their lives while receiving their education and they need school counselors to go to for support. There are some schools who do not even have a school counselor in their school and there are other schools where the school counselor has about 800 students on their caseload. This is far

too many students for one person and makes the job of a school counselor impossible. CT ranks 37<sup>th</sup> in the country for average counselor to student ratios. Many school counselors in CT are struggling to reach all students to support them. They need help and the best ways to do that would be to make sure that there are school counselors in all our schools and that the student to counselor ratio is reasonable so that school counselors can successfully reach all students.

School counselors are advocates for all students who can support students academically. School counselors can implement interventions to give them the tools and the strategies they need to be successful in their classes. Programs could include classrooms lessons on time management, study skills, and test taking strategies, to list a few of the many. By providing students with a variety of helpful skills and techniques to help them be successful academically, students can perform better in all types of classes at the school and perform better on state and nationwide standardized tests. This is important to students because doing well academically will only help them reach their future goals whether it be college or entering the workforce.

With this being said, I ask that the appropriations committee considers appropriating money to school counseling and hiring more school counselors. This cause is bigger than all of us, it will affect the generations to come. Children in CT need more school counselors to be there for them as they go through some of the most crucial times in their lives. If we want our kids to be successful, they need the support of school counselors. I hope you consider making a positive change that will impact many individuals!

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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